

**Minutes of the Special Meeting
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Monday, October 23, 2017
5:00 p.m. – 6:50 p.m.
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Paul Sagan, Chair, Cambridge
James Morton, Vice-Chair, Boston
Ed Doherty, Boston
Amanda Fernandez, Belmont
Michael Moriarty, Holyoke
James Peyser, Secretary of Education
Mary Ann Stewart, Lexington
Hannah Trimarchi, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Marblehead
Martin West, Newton

Jeff Wulfson, Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

Katherine Craven, Brookline
Margaret McKenna, Boston

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and asked the members to introduce themselves. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said this is the annual discussion about student performance on MCAS. He commended the work of Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel, Chief MCAS Analyst Bob Lee, and the Department's entire Student Assessment team in carrying out the Board's November 2015 decision to create and implement the next-generation MCAS tests by spring 2017. The Acting Commissioner noted that some were skeptical the Department could meet the ambitious deadline. He said the Student Assessment team deserves great credit for managing the smooth transition to the new tests.

Ms. Stapel thanked the Acting Commissioner and the Board for their support and acknowledged the assistance provided by the information technology and data teams. Ms. Stapel went through the presentation on the 2017 next-generation MCAS. She noted that in spring 2017, 60 percent of all grades 3-8 students, and 93 percent of students in grades 4 and 8, took the test on computers. In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Lee said there was little variance in results between computer-based and paper testing. Acting Commissioner Wulfson gave credit to the field, Mass IT, and the Department for accomplishing the goal of computer-based testing in grades 4 and 8 and beyond, and noted the initiatives by the Governor and Mass IT to strengthen wifi connections in western Massachusetts.

Ms Stapel reviewed MCAS participation rates and key points relating to the next-generation

MCAS, including higher, but achievable standards; educator participation and involvement; coherence across grade spans; and alignment to readiness at the next level. She explained that the next-generation results cannot be directly compared to results on the legacy MCAS tests.

Mr. Lee discussed data on baseline readiness for the next level (Class of 2013) and noted that statewide, 62 percent enrolled in college that fall with 54 percent persistently enrolled in college. Mr. Lee added that we would like to see that number increase. Secretary Peyser added that the completion rate over a six-year period falls to around 50 percent. In response to a question from Ms. Stewart, Secretary Peyser said that higher education is moving away from the **Accuplacer** college placement tests. Mr. West said that is a positive development and better approaches should be explored.

Ms. Stapel and Mr. Lee reviewed the results of the MCAS legacy tests in science and technology/engineering and at the high school level, the 2017 statewide MCAS results for the class of 2019, and the 2017 next-generation state results. Acting Commissioner Wulfson explained that the results have changed not because students did worse but because we have increased the expectations. Ms. Stapel said our test results are more aligned now with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, and on NAEP Massachusetts is either ranked number one or tied for first. Mr. West noted research that shows proficiency on NAEP is well aligned with college readiness. Mr. Lee reviewed the results by student demographic groups. Ms. Stewart asked about the school climate survey. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Department will release the results of this first-time survey next month.

Ms. Stapel discussed the resources and information that the Department will post on a rolling basis. Ms. Trimarchi asked about resources to explain the results to students. Ms. Stapel said the Department is working on this. Acting Commissioner Wulfson invited the State Student Advisory Council to participate. Ms. Stapel said we are doing more outreach to parents and various resources are available in multiple languages. Mr. Morton expressed concern about the third grade results. The Acting Commissioner said while the test and scoring scale are new, the third grade results do highlight our mission. Mr. Doherty asked if any patterns or findings stood out. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said Mr. Doherty's question will lead us into the next presentation. Mr. Moriarty said he is pleased the standard has not been watered down and he continues to be concerned about the ELA third grade results. Secretary Peyser said a year and a half ago we started this process with healthy skepticism and he thanked Ms. Stapel, Mr. Lee, and the entire assessment team for the smooth administration on a complicated matter. Chair Sagan concurred.

Chair Sagan called for a break at 6:00 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 6:10 p.m. Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Rob Curtin, Associate Commissioner, to provide an overview of the 2017 district and school accountability determinations, including assessment and accountability results for Level 5 schools and districts. The Acting Commissioner noted this is a transitional year for the school and district accountability system, and he will come back to the Board over the next several months to discuss possible changes to the accountability system.

Mr. Curtin reviewed the current framework for district and school accountability and assistance

and noted the Board approved an amendment to the regulations in April 2017 which allowed the Department to refrain from placing certain schools into Levels 1-3 at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. He added that it applies to one year only, affects schools serving grades 3-8 that administered the next-generation MCAS tests in 2017, and does not affect high schools serving grades 9-12. Mr. Curtin said the Department did not identify any new Level 4 or Level 5 schools serving grades 3-8 in 2017. He reviewed the 2016 and 2017 district levels and the accountability levels for high schools that administered the legacy MCAS tests.

Mr. Curtin informed the Board that seven high schools received commendations and three additional schools were blue ribbon recipients. Mr. Curtin said the Acting Commissioner has removed the Randolph Public Schools from Level 4 status. Mr. Curtin commended Superintendent Anderson and the school community on the improved student performance and governance. The Acting Commissioner said he has not placed or exited any additional Level 4 districts or schools, anticipating that the accountability system will be updated later this year and some schools may be eligible next year.

Mr. Johnston provided an overview of the results from the four Level 5 schools and three Level 5 districts. Mr. Johnston noted volatility in math results at the Morgan School in Holyoke. Mr. Moriarty commented on the variance in outcomes grade by grade. Mr. Johnston said Receiver Zrike is taking that under consideration. Mr. Johnston went over the results from the Parker School in New Bedford, UP Academy Holland in Boston and the Dever School in Boston.

Mr. Johnston provided a brief overview of results from the three Level 5 districts, noting that Lawrence continues to show signs of steady growth and continued development. He said Southbridge is only in the first year of its turnaround plan and has room to improve. Mr. Johnston said in Holyoke there are concerns about progress at the high school level and elsewhere, and the district is taking steps including engaging in a high school redesign for next year. He said Receiver Zrike will update the Board in the coming months. Mr. Moriarty said the community needs the Holyoke turnaround plan to succeed. Acting Commissioner Wulfson noted turnaround is more challenging at the high school level than at earlier grades.

Chair Sagan thanked the panelists.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Wulfson
Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education
and Secretary to the Board